

Agile Mind Response to “6-8 Review of Standards for Mathematical Practice”

We begin with thanks to the reviewers for their time and attention. The careful evaluation of curriculum and assessment materials is an important, painstaking, and often overlooked part of instructional leadership, and we understand the time and thought that the process requires. We learned from each of the reviewers, and we greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information in response to the reviews.

In this response we will address the reviews of the Agile Mind Mathematics 6-8 materials related to the Standards for Mathematical Practice materials.

The reviews appeared to indicate that there is limited to moderate evidence that the Agile Mind materials support the Standards for Mathematical Practice contained in the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM). In designing the Dana Center/Agile Mind mathematics course programs, the Dana Center and other leading educators enacted a guiding philosophy that anticipated the development of the CCSSM: that, to truly engage in mathematics, to achieve at high levels, and to persist through learning challenges that prepare them for higher education and the contemporary workplace, students need to develop successful methods of approaching mathematical learning. For that reason, mathematical reasoning, effective communication, making connections, and problem solving are cornerstones of the Dana Center design represented in our courses.

It is a key reason why the Dana Center and Agile Mind have been chosen by leading foundations to work with districts and states over the next three years to facilitate their migration to the CCSSM. Also, we recognize that a part of the adoption of the CCSSM is the reconciliation, by educators, of alternate views of how best to support these new practices.

Thus, ours is not a traditional textbook curriculum, nor does it represent a simply “digital” curriculum. Rather, the Dana Center/Agile Mind course programs constitute a next-generation teaching and learning system designed to support a dynamic and highly productive classroom environment with teacher as conductor. This system includes, under one umbrella, comprehensive resources that make teaching and learning more effective and work together to provide a complete teaching and learning experience, encompassing:

- next-generation technologies that support teacher-facilitated classroom instruction
- professional advice and support for teachers, including research-based, high-yield teaching and learning strategies
- student practice, review, and test preparation
- embedded formative assessments
- real-time grading and reporting to guide instruction

The processes and proficiencies described in the CCSS for Mathematical Practice are thus supported through a blend of these three critical components:

1. Online instruction and assessment resources
2. Online, printable advice to teachers on enacting lessons – supported by the online instructional pages and printable Student Activity Sheets – that engage students in problem-solving, collaborative work, and communication through written and oral discussion and presentation
3. Printable constructed response assessments that equip teachers to provide students with additional opportunities to develop proficiency with the Standards for Mathematical Practice, including students making sense of problems and persevering in solving them, constructing and justifying arguments, using tools, and attending to precision

When these three resources are used together, students are supported in their learning and held responsible for the practices and proficiencies that are highlighted in the Standards for Mathematical Practice, and that are critical to a student's long-term success in their mathematical education. A review of all three components of our programs makes clear the full vision of the student learning experience.